

To lay further questions and objections to rest, another school of interpretation was developed. So just how and when did the Preterist school of prophetic interpretation begin? Dr. Guinness in his book *The Approaching End of the Age* answers that thought-provoking question with this observation:

The first or PRETERIST scheme, considers these prophecies to have been fulfilled in the downfall of the Jewish nation and the old Roman Empire, limiting their range thus to the first six centuries of the Christian era, and making Nero Antichrist.

This scheme originated with the Jesuit Alcazar toward the end of the sixteenth century; it has been held and taught under various modifications by Grotuis, Hammond, Bossuet, Eichhorn and other German commentators, Moses Stuart, and Dr. Davidson. It has few supporters now, and need not be described more at length.

Notice that Dr. Guinness mentions that Preterism had few supporters in 1887. However, today it is enjoying resurgence and is the view held by many of the Reformed faith. Those of the Preterist school of interpretation should take special note of Dr. Guinness' statement taken from page 113 of *Romanism and the Reformation*:

Some writers asserted that the predictions pointed back to Nero. This did not take into account the obvious fact that the antichrist power predicted was to succeed the fall of the Caesars, and develop among the Gothic nations.

Leroy Froom in his book *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. II confirms the foregoing facts of history:

Rome's answer to the Protestant Reformation was two fold, though actually conflicting and contradictory. Through the Jesuits RIBERA, of Salamanca, Spain, and BELLARMINE, of Rome, the Papacy put forth her Futurist interpretation. And through Alcazar, Spanish Jesuit of Seville, she advanced almost simultaneously the conflicting Preterist interpretation. These were designed to meet and overwhelm the Historical interpretation of the Protestants. Though mutually exclusive, either Jesuit alternative suited the great objective equally well, as both thrust

aside the application of the prophecies from the existing Church of Rome. The one accomplished it by making prophecy stop altogether short of Papal Rome's career. The other achieved it by making it overleap the immense era of Papal dominance, crowding Antichrist into a small fragment of time in the still distant future, just before the great consummation. It is consequently often called the gap theory. . .

Concerning the two alternatives, presented by Ribera and Alcazar, consigning Antichrist either to the remote past or future, Joseph Tanner, the Protestant writer, gives this record:

Accordingly, toward the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfilment [sic] of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the Preterist method of interpretation, which we have already briefly noticed, and thus endeavored to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the Papal Power by bringing out the Futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years. Thus, as Alford says, the Jesuit Ribera, about A.D. 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the Futurist system in modern times.

E.B. Elliott states precisely the same fact, only assigning slightly different dates; and many others such as Dr. Candish, of Edinburgh, also support the charges. Thus the fact is established.

Rev. E. B. Elliott, quoted by Froom in the preceding paragraph, is that great English scholar from Cambridge University. In his four volume literary masterpiece, *Horae Apocalypticae*; or A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical, Elliott supports the evidence thus far that both Preterist and Futurist interpretations of prophecy originated with Rome:

It was stated at the conclusion of my Sketch of the History of Apocalyptic Interpretation, that there are at present two, and but two, grand general counter-Schemes to what may be called the historic Protestant view of the Apocalypse: that view which regards the prophecy as a prefiguration of the great events that were to happen in the Church, and the world connected with it, from St. John's time to the consummation; including specially the establishment of the

Popedom, and reign of Papal Rome, as in some way or other the fulfilment [sic] of the types of the Apocalyptic Beast and Babylon. The first of these two counter-Schemes is the Praeterists', which would have the prophecy stop altogether short of the Popedom, explaining it of the catastrophes, one or both, of the Jewish Nation and Pagan Rome; and of which there are two sufficiently distinct varieties: the second the Futurists'; which in its original form would have it all shoot over the head of the Popedom into times yet future; and refer simply to the events that are immediately to precede, or to accompany, Christ's second Advent; or, in its various modified forms, have them for its chief subject. I shall in this second Part of my Appendix proceed successively to examine these two, or rather four, anti-Protestant counter-Schemes; and show, if I mistake not, the palpable untenableness alike of one and all. Which done, it may perhaps be well, from respect to his venerated name, to add an examination of the late Dr. Arnold's general prophetic counter-theory. This, together with a notice of certain recent counter-views on the Millennium, will complete our review of counter-prophetic Schemes.

Now with regard to the Praeterist Scheme, on the review of which we are first to enter, it may be remembered that I stated it to have had its origin with the Jesuit Alcasar, and that it was subsequently, and after Grotius' and Hammond's prior adoption of it, adopted and improved by Bossuet, the great Papal champion, under one form and modification; then afterwards, under another modification, by Hernnschneider, Eichhorn, and others of the German critical and generally infidel school of the last half-century [Emphasis added]; followed in our own era by Heinrichs, and by Moses Stuart of the United States of America. The two modifications appear to have arisen mainly out of the differences of date assigned to the Apocalypse; whether about the end of Nero's reign or Domitian's. I shall, I think, pretty well exhaust whatever can be thought to call for examination in the system in considering separately, first the Neronic, or favourite German form and modification of the Praeterist Scheme, as propounded by Eichhorn, Hug, Heinrichs, and Moses Stuart; secondly Bossuet's Domitianic form, the one most generally approved, I believe, by Roman Catholics.

First, as to Preterism's penetrations into Protestantism, we may note that in 1791 J.G. Eichhorn (1752-1827), the noted German rationalist, revived and republished Alcazar's Preterist interpretation. Soon he was joined by other rationalist scholars, such as G.H.A. Ewald (1803-1875), G.C.F. Lucke (1791-1855), W.M.L. De Wette (1780-1849), Franz Delitsch (1813-1890), and Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). And since 1830 numerous British and American scholars have followed Eichhorn. In 1830 Prof. Samuel Lee of Cambridge, likewise injected Bossuet's Preterist interpretation into the discussion. Prof. Moses Stuart, of Andover (1780-1852), introduced Preterism into the United States about 1842, and Dr. Samuel Davidson reiterated it in England in 1844. These, and many others, all contended with the Papacy that nothing beyond the destruction of pagan Rome and Judaism was intended by the prophecies concerning Antichrist in the Apocalypse.

While Froom identifies those who advanced Preterism as rationalists, it was Elliott who was even more accurate in his description of them. Remember his words:

". . .then afterwards, under another modification, by Hernnschneider, Eichhorn, and others of German critical and generally infidel school of the last half-century followed in our own era by Heinrichs, and by Moses Stuart of the United States of America."

### Summation

It is argued that the revelations of Guinness, Tanner, Elliott, Froom, and others are simply anti-Catholic vilification and of no historical accuracy. On the contrary, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants agree as to the origin of these interpretations. The Roman Catholic writer G.S. Hitchcock writes:

The Futuristic School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Antichrist, Babylon and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian Dispensation. The Praeterist School, founded by Jesuit Alcasar in 1614, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem, or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D. 16

This Roman Catholic confirmation of the origins of Futurism and Preterism validate the writings of Froom, Elliott, Guinness and others.

To answer the question posed at the beginning of this booklet concerning the origin of the Futurist and Preterist views of prophecy, all of the writers quoted are in agreement: Rome is guilty.

While the original question has been answered, it should be pointed out that at this late date in history the political and spiritual ramifications from either of these errors should be carefully considered by all. The most obvious one is the slow drift back to Rome we see in many of our churches and para-church groups.

For these errors to have grown to the extent seen today it would appear a substantial segment of our Protestant ministers and theologians have neglected a careful and thorough study of church history and the prophetic Word.

While none of us has all knowledge, and cherished dogmas are difficult to abandon, it behooves us to listen to the Apostle Paul's words of commendation about the Church at Berea:

Acts 17:10-11

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."